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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: OBAMA-NOBEL, AFGHANISTAN, ITALY, UK, U.S.;

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¶1. Lead Stories Summary

Print media have only one story this morning: the awarding of the Nobel literature prize to German novelist Herta Mller. Editorials

focused on Italy's Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi losing his immunity, and on Herta Mller. ZDF-TV's early evening newscast heute and ARD-TV's early evening newscast Tagesschau also opened with reports on Mller.

¶2. (U.S.-Norway) President Obama Awarded Nobel Peace Prize

Commercial TV station n-tv (10/09) noted: "Sensation in Oslo. Obama

gets the Nobel Prize at a time when he is faced with many challenges...

So is this a prize thought to be an incentive to do more? ... This is certainly coming as a surprise to the White House... Honoring a president who has still three or maybe seven years to go is certainly daring. This continues the trend of honoring other politicians such

as Arafat, where you could have had serious doubts later that the honoring was justified. However, Obama cannot be equated with such politicians because he has shown during his election campaign and in the first months of his presidency that he is serious about

dialogue,
for instance by opening direct talks with Iran."

A commentator on N24-TV (10/09) said: "This is not the first time that the committee in Oslo has sent a signal by awarding the prize to a person who is seen as a great hope so early in his political career.

When Willy Brandt got the prize in 1971 he had only been chancellor for two years and his rapprochement policy towards the East was far from complete. He was able to make use of the prize to counter the domestic resistance to his policy. This is probably the intention of the Nobel Prize committee: While President Obama is too new to office for the committee to honor his policy, it hopes to support him for what is still to come.... This is an investment in a man the world is expecting to do a lot.... This is a political signal and he will make use of it."

Spiegel Online (10/09) reported: "Sensational decision: Barack Obama gets the Nobel Peace Prize. The committee in Oslo honored the U.S. President for his extraordinary efforts to strengthen diplomacy and

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cooperation between people. Only very few expected this decision....

The committee announced that Obama's vision for a world free of nuclear weapons played a special role in the decision-making."

ZDF-TV's Mittagsmagazin (10/09) reported: "While some think he has not done anything yet, the rest of the world believes he has already achieved a great deal. Unlike his predecessor, he has reached out to the world, e.g. the Prague speech, the Cairo speech. These are all very important symbols.... This will certainly strengthen him."

13. (Afghanistan) Future U.S. Strategy

Spiegel Online (10/09) headlined "U.S. examines cooperation with the Taliban," and added: "President Obama's government is possibly about to change its policy on Afghanistan. Secretary Clinton is considering cooperating with the Taliban. This could mean that the military commanders' call to deploy more troops to Afghanistan will not be realized."

Under the headline "U.S. army lacks resources for mission in Afghanistan," Handelsblatt (10/09) reported that "President Obama might decide the new U.S. strategy on Afghanistan today.... Obama's decision-making is not just influenced by strategic considerations. If the President sends numerous additional forces to Afghanistan, it would be a great challenge for the U.S. army... With some 550,000

soldiers, the U.S. army is only a third of the size it used to be during the Vietnam War... The sluggish increase in the number of troops has to do with the fact that former Secretary Rumsfeld pursued a plan limiting the number of military recruitments in order to cut down on

costs. Only under current Secretary Gates, was recruitment accelerated.... The U.S. would therefore have to rely all the more on support from its allies. Canadian Defense Minister Mackay is expecting Gates to call on European allies during the NATO defense ministerial in Bratislava in two weeks to deploy additional troops.... There is uneasiness among European allies because they feel poorly informed by the United States. A NATO diplomat said the U.S. has so far understood Afghanistan to be an American war. It is therefore not astonishing the Europeans are waiting for Obama's decision."

In a lengthy analytic piece under the headline "contradictions of a mission," Frankfurter Allgemeine (10/09) wrote: "Obama's hesitation to respond to the call for more troops in Afghanistan and to take more risks corresponds with the hesitation of the NATO allies.... In his report to Washington, General McChrystal only summed up what most ISAF commanders currently think and stand by. However, he has not

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discussed and resolved the contradiction of, on the one hand, the need for an active and preemptive fight against insurgents and, on the other hand, for the protection of civilians... According to German officials, McChrystal is also under massive political pressure from a political advisor representing the government in Washington who accompanies him to meetings. The commander in chief knows that time is getting short."

¶4. (Italy) Implications of Court Ruling on Berlusconi

All papers (10/09) reported of Italy's Prime Minister Berlusconi's reaction to the decision of the Constitutional Court, which overturned a law that granted him immunity from prosecution. Sueddeutsche headlined: "Left-Wing Conspiracy," and reported that "Minister President Berlusconi again assailed President Napolitano and the Constitutional Court. The opposition forces were outraged, as were

some government members, as they called upon Berlusconi to show moderation." Die Welt wrote under the headline: "Berlusconi Wants to Defend Himself," and reported: "The Berlusconi era is not yet over.

Even after the Constitutional Court suspended his immunity, it is not yet clear the escape artist will not succeed in having the two chambers of Italy's parliament adopt a 'waterproof' immunity bill that stands above all constitutional concerns." die tageszeitung headlined: "A Bad Loser," and wrote that, with his reaction, "Berlusconi is now presenting the strategy of his right-wing coalition: in substance, he is refusing to accept the ruling of the

Constitutional court and is not even shying away from a constitutional conflict with the president. The Italian prime minister is convinced that the approval of the voters...will not suffer even after this ruling, because he has worked for more than 15 years now in explaining to the public that he has become a victim of political justice."

Sueddeutsche Zeitung (10/09) judged: "For how long does Silvio Berlusconi want to rule? For how long will he be allowed to abuse the

president, the justices at the Constitutional Court, and his political enemies? For how long will the Italians allow him to abuse their patience? For more than 15 years, this man, who has lost all his inhibitions, has dominated his people, irrespective of whether he was the opposition leader or government head. During this period, Italy

has become worse off. As far as the economy is concerned, it has taken a step back, and as far as politics is concerned, Italy is hardly taken seriously abroad. It has lost domestic cohesion."

In the view of Frankfurter Allgemeine (10/09), "Italy is facing stormy times. This rude fierceness with which Berlusconi attacked the president and the Constitutional Court does not bode well. In this 'war of institutions,' which Berlusconi now wants to fight though with his compatriots, Italy cannot win."

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According to Handelsblatt (10/09), "the government head of one of the most important EU countries has lost his immunity and must now face several trials. This smells of a state crisis, but as a matter of fact, it is not, because we are in Italy and the affected person is Silvio Berlusconi. That is why different rules are valid, and it is extremely unlikely that he will step down or that new elections will be held after the ruling of the Constitutional Court. And if new elections are really held, Berlusconi would win again. One reason is different ethical standards that dominate in Italy. Corruption and tax evasion do not have such a negative connotation as, for instance, in Germany."

Berliner Zeitung (10/09) opined: "In every other country, the prime minister would have stepped down in view of such facts. But Berlusconi does not want to give up, at least not as long as his coalition partners continue to support him for strategic calculations. He has nothing to fear from the left wing in parliament. It is in a desolate state. That is why the debate over Berlusconi could soon be transferred to the streets places in Italy. He announced yesterday that he wanted to demonstrate to Italians what kind of man he is. This is reassuring for one camp and a threat to the other camp."

Financial Times Deutschland (10/09) is of a different opinion and editorializes: "It may be possible that Silvio Berlusconi is a scoundrel. But the Italians, who have elected him as prime minister for the third time, already know this. The courts frequently proved that he relied on corruption to build up his media empire. But if Italians, nevertheless, elected a scoundrel as prime minister, then this prime minister must also have the chance to govern. Of course,

Berlusconi must be held accountable for his machinations. But it cannot be the right of a few judges either to determine the end of his term by arresting him. Irrespective of the current case, Italy needs a law that shows the justice authorities their limits and protects the

state leadership from prosecution, even though this would require an amendment to the Constitution. Such a rule could save the country a month-long trench warfare and political standstill."

Regional daily Mnchener Merkur (10/09) opined: "Basically, the ruling of the Constitutional Court is unspectacular. It is the normal reaction of a state to the attempt of one individual politician to put himself above the institutions. Every citizen understands this, but not Berlusconi. This elusive politician is still hoping that there

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will be no political alternative to him. But this should change if the past catches up with him before the court. For Italy, this means an eroding loss of reputation, and Berlusconi does not want to save his compatriots from such a development. Otherwise he would have taken the necessary steps and stepped down."

15. (UK) Tory Party Conference

Sddeutsche editorialized: "The Tory leader has charisma and can speak quite well. However, charisma is not a feat if the political opponent is Gordon Brown, who is as warmhearted as a tense bulldog. And a charismatic speaker can quickly turn into a vain chatterbox. Barack Obama is currently undergoing this experience. Cameron once saw him as a model.... In a crisis, people do not want rhetoric but determination. So far, Cameron has not shown any of that. A victory of the Tories is therefore not certain."

Die Welt carried an editorial under the headline: "On the Island of Debt," and judged: "No other party but the Tories has ever tried to win elections for the House of Commons by demonstrating so much courage. They made a clear statement on what is needed in the future, ranging from a strict austerity policy to wage cuts and a retirement

age that will be shifted. This alone is evidence of the tense situation in the UK. In this situation, the gamble the British conservatives are taking with their European Union membership looks

like a partisan attempt to push aside of a lot of bad news. They think that by coming on strong to Brussels, they can let off steam towards the EU. But splendid isolation is no answer to the EU's reform deficiencies; only cooperation would be."

16. (U.S.) Economic Development

Handelsblatt (10/09) deals with the interpretation of the quarterly results of U.S. companies and warns of rash conclusions. The daily editorialized: "Alcoa has now offered a picture which we will continue to see during the reporting season of quarterly results. Almost all results are favorable because the companies cut costs, while sales continue to stay at the crisis level. At best, they improve slightly, and, in a worst case scenario, (such as in the U.S. automobile industry) they are again beginning to decline. This does not leave

companies any other choice but to continue to thin out their staff and to orient their activities to medium-term lower sales levels. For the largest economy in the world, this is a central and still underestimated problem in the financial industry. Even if the quarterly results are better than expected, they will be at the expense of the people and will escalate the unemployment problem. The dangerous development is that in the second wave of staff cuts,

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well-paid managers and employees will also lose their jobs. In addition, an increasing number of civil servants in the United States will lose their jobs because states such as California are almost bankrupt and must cut their budgets. The trend of, to an increasing extent, well-paid workers also losing their jobs is already apparent...and this means that a cut of consumer spending is only a question of time. And for trade, these are sad prospects which do not fit the picture of a solid recovery. The jobs that the United States is currently losing in crisis sectors cannot be built up again in other sectors. In the short-term, all indications are that, despite assistance, more jobs will be lost in the United States than new ones will be created. In order to break this trend, corporate America needs an increase in sales at home and in competitive products for the markets abroad. But improved quarterly results that are primarily based on cuts are at best tranquilizers for the financial market."

MURPHY